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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KHAN (Pakistan)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 89: ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/49/204-E/1994/90, A/49/205-E/1994/91, A/49/223-E/1994/105, A/49/229, A/49/256, A/49/287-S/1994/894, A/49/307-S/1994/958, A/49/381, A/49/462 and Corr.1 and A/49/479)

(a) IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/49/463)

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(c) SUSTAINABLE USE AND CONSERVATION OF THE MARINE LIVING RESOURCES OF THE HIGH SEAS: UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON STRADDLING FISH STOCKS AND HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS (continued) (A/49/254 and A/49/522)

1. Mr. AL-HABIB (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that many of the commitments that had been made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had yet to be translated into action. In 1993, the ratio of official development assistance (ODA) to the gross national product (GNP) of donor countries had declined to 0.29 per cent, the lowest level since 1973. Moreover, the resources of the Global Environment Facility fell far short of the amount required for the implementation of Agenda 21.

2. The international community should endeavour to maintain the robust political support for sustainable development by focusing on action-oriented measures. The ad hoc inter-sessional groups of the Commission on Sustainable Development should seek innovative approaches for mobilizing new and additional financial resources and promoting the transfer of environmentally sound technology. Coordination between the Commission and other international organizations dealing with various sectoral and cross-sectoral issues was of great importance. In that respect, priority should be given to strengthening working relations with the Global Environment Facility.

3. Recalling that, in resolution 47/190, the General Assembly had decided to convene, not later than 1997, a special session for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of Agenda 21 and had requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its forty-ninth session a report containing recommendations on the format, scope and organizational aspects of such a special session, he noted that no mention had been made of that important subject. He also noted that, at its first session, the Commission on Sustainable Development had decided to undertake at its 1997 session an overall review of the progress achieved in the implementation of Agenda 21. Perhaps the Secretariat could provide some clarification on the matter.

4. In keeping with its commitment to sustainable development and the implementation of Agenda 21, the Islamic Republic of Iran had established a High-level Committee on Sustainable Development whose main objective was to

coordinate environmental policies and programmes. Under the auspices of the Committee, national strategies on sustainable development and multilateral environmental cooperation were being prepared. Moreover, given the magnitude of the problem of desertification of the Islamic Republic of Iran, a special commission on desertification had been established.

5. The Iranian Parliament was in the final stages of its ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change. Various projects were being implemented to reduce pollution, increase public awareness about the environment and encourage public participation in environmental activities. His Government was aware of the importance of regional cooperation for the protection of the environment and was cooperating with other States to preserve the environmental and ecological integrity of the fragile Caspian Sea ecosystem.

6. Mr. ŽEBRÁKOVSKÝ (Czech Republic) said that one of the most important results of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had been the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The very recent changes and improvements in the work of the Commission, specifically the successful efforts to make it more transparent, dynamic, and efficient, would enable the Commission to make further significant progress. His delegation welcomed the Commission's efforts to explore in greater detail the potential of such important cross-sectoral issues as sustainable patterns of production and consumption and the introduction of innovative ways of financing sustainable development and facilitating the transfer of technology.

7. His delegation appreciated the increased emphasis on the relationship between trade, development and environment as an important means of implementing Agenda 21. The Commission should, in close cooperation with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), become more involved in that area.

8. The mandate of the Commission called for continuous work, which could not be accomplished at its annual sessions. Unless the Commission's inter-sessional activities were carried out on a more systematic and coordinated basis, the Commission might not fulfil its expected role as the principal advisory and coordinating body in the field of sustainable development. Cooperation between the United Nations Environment Programme and the Commission was crucial to the implementation of the goals of both organizations.

9. With a view to implementing the agreements of the Rio Conference and Agenda 21, the Czech Republic had established a National Committee on Sustainable Development and had pledged to increase its contribution to the core fund of the Global Environment Facility and play a more active role in the Facility's operations. The Czech Republic had ratified most of the main United Nations conventions on the environment and was actively involved in their implementation at both the national and international levels. In general, the Czech Republic was prepared to take part in negotiations on new protocols to existing environmental conventions and, possibly, a global convention on protection of forests. In cooperation with the Commission on Sustainable

Development, the Czech Republic was organizing a Workshop on Economic Instruments for Sustainable Development, which would be held in Prague in January 1995.

10. Mr. ELISSEEV (Ukraine) said that the results of the second session of the Commission on Sustainable Development had shown that the Commission was gradually becoming an intergovernmental structure capable of promoting a multilateral dialogue and adopting important consensus decisions on problems of sustainable development. However, unless the international economic climate improved and donor countries increased their ODA, it would be difficult to implement fully the decisions and recommendations of the Rio Conference.

11. One way of improving the Commission's work was to integrate sectoral and cross-sectoral discussions and to equalize relations among the various sectors. The Commission should continue its consideration of such important aspects of sustainable development as environment and development. The Commission should adopt a more balanced approach to activities at the international level and pay more attention to countries' specific needs and efforts undertaken at the national level. There should be greater linkage between the development of sectoral cooperation programmes and the resources needed for their implementation.

12. It was important to find effective ways to increase cooperation between the Commission for Sustainable Development and other intergovernmental mechanisms, such as the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and Habitat II.

13. His delegation welcomed the restructuring and replenishment of the Global Environment Facility. It was important to make use of the Facility's capacity to strengthen priority programmes in both the developing countries and countries with economies in transition. For most countries with economies in transition, revenue from foreign economic activities were one of the most important sources of financing sustainable development policies. In that regard, his delegation supported the proposal made by the representative of Belarus on the convening, under United Nations auspices, of an international conference on the sustainable development of countries with economies in transition.

14. His delegation attached great importance to the work of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and was in favour of responsible fishing in the world's oceans and seas in accordance with international agreements. His delegation would not accept any attempts by littoral States to legalize unilateral measures to protect fish stocks and to extend them to areas of the high seas that were adjacent to exclusive economic zones. The mandate of the Conference should be extended to 1995 in order to enable it to complete work on the draft agreement for the implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea relating to the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks.

15. Mr. HURST (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the 12 countries members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the Caribbean countries were the most vulnerable to the consequences of climate change. Both as a subregion and as members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), the CARICOM countries had always maintained that the industrialized countries, which accounted for the largest share of global emissions of greenhouse gases, must bear exclusive responsibility for containing, reducing and eliminating the damage caused to the environment by the emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. Those concerns were adequately addressed in the AOSIS draft protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on greenhouse gas emissions reduction, which called for new commitments on the part of the industrialized countries to limit their emissions of greenhouse gases. It also encouraged the developed countries that were parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change to adopt specific targets and timetables to limit or reduce other greenhouse gases not controlled by the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The CARICOM countries associated themselves fully with the statement made by the Group of 77 on the concept of joint implementation.

16. The CARICOM countries were keenly aware of the need for technical and scientific expertise and access to the transfer of environmentally sound technology. They therefore welcomed the initiatives taken by the interim secretariat of the Convention in cooperation with other United Nations organizations with regard to an information exchange system and a training programme outlined in paragraphs 47 and 48 of the report of the Secretary-General on protection of global climate environment for present and future generations of mankind (A/49/485).

17. Among the issues remaining to be resolved was the location of the Convention's permanent secretariat. The secretariat should be accessible to all developing countries, but in particular to small island States. Those States were also concerned about their ability to participate in the meetings of parties to the Convention because of the inability of the interim secretariat to provide financial assistance to enable their experts to attend. He called for additional extrabudgetary contributions in order to maintain the two special voluntary funds established under General Assembly resolution 45/212.

18. The entry into force of the Framework Convention provided the international community with the means to arrest global warming and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. However, it was only a first step. The draft protocol presented by the AOSIS group provided a targeted framework for the reduction of greenhouse gases. The debate on its provisions should begin at the eleventh session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, with subsequent adoption at the first Conference of Parties.

19. Mrs. SHARMA (Nepal) said that sustainable development could not be based on compromise. Her delegation agreed on the need for additional efforts from the developed countries in the areas of transfer of environmentally sound technology and capacity-building.

20. Nepal had ratified both the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. Their entry into force showed the readiness and deep commitment among the developing countries to follow the path of sustainable development.

21. Her delegation welcomed the Commission's intentions to increase cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization. A truly global programme of sustainable development could not be achieved unless the needs of the weakest and most vulnerable were met. In the least developed countries, poverty was the root cause of all problems related to localized environmental degradation. The impact of decisions currently being taken would continue far into the future. All countries must act as partners in order to maintain the momentum generated by UNCED.

22. Mrs. JUNEJO (Pakistan) said that the documents approved at the Rio Conference constituted a global recognition of the twin imperatives of development with equity and development without damage to the environment. The international community must ensure that the inequality in the evolution of international economic relations was not repeated in the new partnership to promote sustainable development.

23. The Commission on Sustainable Development was perhaps the only intergovernmental forum dealing with the issue of changing consumption and production patterns. Since the provision of new and additional resources was an essential condition for the effective implementation of Agenda 21, it was disappointing to see that the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was being launched with only $2 billion; the indicative financial requirement for the implementation of Agenda 21 had been estimated at $125 billion per year. Access for their exports to the markets of developed countries was essential if the developing countries were to achieve sustainable development. The recent stress on environmental conditionalities was a disturbing trend and was inconsistent with the principle of a free multilateral trading system. The Governments of developed countries should identify which were the environment related provisions in their trade regulations which discriminated against developing countries.

24. Global action was needed to implement the various international conventions signed in recent years, to mobilize opinion and establish a framework for cooperation and adequate financial and technical assistance. However, much of the concrete action would take place at the national and local levels. Pakistan had been among the pioneers in national environmental planning and management, with a National Conservation Strategy that predated the Rio Summit.

25. Mr. PIERRE (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the 12 States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) which were members of the United Nations, said that the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States marked the first major action in implementation of Agenda 21. He also noted with satisfaction that the Framework Convention on Climate Change had entered into force and that the Convention on Biological Diversity would soon do so.

26. While welcoming the agreement reached on the replenishment of the resources of the Global Environment Facility, the CARICOM countries remained gravely concerned by the developed countries' failure to meet the financial commitments which they had undertaken and which were essential for the full and effective implementation of Agenda 21. Many commitments in the areas of technology transfer, capacity-building and changing consumption and production patterns also remained unfulfilled. The emphasis placed on those areas by the Commission on Sustainable Development was welcome. Special responsibility for changing consumption and production patterns lay with the developed countries. Developing societies also were confronted with patterns of consumption and production that were detrimental to sustainable development; however, as the Commission itself had recognized, for them, eradicating poverty and meeting basic human needs were overriding priorities.

27. The Commission's work should become more focused and less theoretical. The CARICOM countries were of the view that it was not too soon to begin discussing the format, scope and organizational aspects of the Special Session of the General Assembly to be held in 1997 to review the implementation of Agenda 21.

28. Mr. SREENIVASAN (India) said that the preparations by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change for the first Conference of the Parties had amounted to a renegotiation of the commitments entered into at the Rio Conference. It had been recognized in Rio de Janeiro that there were common but differentiated responsibilities with respect to the control of greenhouse gases. Developed countries had to take the lead in reducing those emissions; at the same time, developing countries should not be prevented from undertaking development activities out of concern for the environment. Accordingly, it had been agreed that additional resources and technology at concessional terms should be provided to the developing countries in order to enable them to control their emissions. Those resources, however, had not been forthcoming.

29. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee was seeking reaffirmation in practical terms of the principles accepted in Rio de Janeiro. The restructuring of the Global Environment Facility had gone some way towards resolving the problem relating to the financing mechanism. However, resources available under the Facility were still extremely limited and its role in relation to the Conference of the Parties was still in doubt. Under the Convention, the Conference of the Parties was the supreme policy-making body responsible, inter alia, for establishing eligibility criteria for financing. Serious consideration would have to be given to procedures for the funding of programmes that accorded with the priorities of developing countries.

30. Another difficulty consisted in the lack of clarity of several concepts in the Framework Convention on Climate Change, such as agreed full incremental costs and joint implementation. There was a fear that joint implementation by developed countries of activities in developing countries might dilute the commitments of the developed countries themselves. In addition, there had been no agreement as to how technology transfer on a concessional basis could be achieved.

31. In India's view, the main problem was that the developed countries lacked the political will to implement the Convention. There had been an awareness even in Rio that the international community would have to strengthen the commitments of the industrialized countries and find a means of extending them beyond the year 2000. However, without agreement on a fundamental basis for implementing the Convention, negotiations on a protocol to extend commitments might become a distraction and should be deferred.

32. Mr. DIAZ (Venezuela) said that as a member of the Commission, Venezuela was concerned at the difficulty that had been experienced in establishing a genuine process of dialogue during meetings, except in the case of the panels held during the High-Level Segment. Moreover, the content of the decisions adopted tended to be vague repetitions of Agenda 21 and were not action-oriented. Perhaps more time should be spent formulating practical recommendations rather than on making speeches.

33. The intersessional meetings on sectoral themes organized by some countries and international organizations outside the ambit of the Commission on Sustainable Development were another source of concern. Access to those meetings was limited, particularly for developing countries, and the nature of the recommendations that they adopted cast some doubt on their scope and reliability. There was a risk that they might complicate rather than facilitate the intergovernmental discussions. In that context, his Government reiterated its support for the intergovernmental machinery in the form of ad hoc working groups on sectoral and intersectoral themes set up by the Commission on Sustainable Development. Moreover, the selective nature of the themes considered tended to marginalize the discussion of such basic intersectoral issues as the transfer of technology and financial resources for sustainable development. Such activities might tend to separate basic components of the consensus formula regarding sustainable development by laying greater stress on the environmental component.

34. From the substantive point of view, his delegation supported the emphasis being placed on particular sectoral themes such as consumption and production patterns and toxic waste. His Government was willing to share its experience in introducing environmental costs into production processes in basic sectors of the economy, such as the oil industry. Its unilateral imposition of restrictions on the export of certain petroleum derivatives in spite of their high degree of competitiveness illustrated the multidimensional nature of those themes and the desirability of discussing them in an appropriate intergovernmental context.

35. The goal of sustainable development would be furthered by the liberalization of trade and by action to ensure that trade and environment were mutually supportive. That did not, however, mean that any country could unilaterally impose discriminatory trade restrictions on the pretext of environmental considerations.

36. Ms. ASHIPALA (Namibia) said that as a follow-up to the Rio Conference, her country's Ministry of Environment and Tourism had prepared a 12-point plan,

comprising, inter alia, environmental legislation, a biodiversity information system, environmental education and partnership programmes, aimed at promoting natural resource management. However, unless such efforts were supported, for example through the Global Environment Facility, they would remain unimplemented. The need for financial resources could not be overstated. It was in that context that the Member States of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic had stressed the importance of the implementation of Agenda 21 in the final declaration of a recent meeting held in Brasilia.

37. Her delegation hoped that the proposed review in 1997 of progress made since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development would cover, in particular, the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification, which had recently been opened for signature. The results of the other conferences, including the forthcoming World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 would also offer interesting material for the review.

38. As a coastal State, Namibia was particularly interested in the conservation of the living resources of the high seas and supported the preparation of an agreement on the conservation and management of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks. It was important to note, however, that most developing countries were not in a position to benefit from such resources. In that connection, she stressed the importance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea as an instrument regulating the use of the oceans and their resources in the interest of all nations.

39. Ms. FLORES (Uruguay) reported that her country had taken a number of environmental initiatives, including the establishment of a Ministry of Housing, Regional Development and the Environment; the adoption of a law on environmental impact assessment; the implementation of ecological preservation programmes; and the inclusion of the theme of the environment in national school curricula. In addition, recognizing the importance of establishing an international legal framework to regulate environmental issues, it had become a party to a large number of conventions and instruments, relating to the environment, including, most recently, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

40. With technical assistance, Uruguay would draw up a national inventory of carbon dioxide emissions and, eventually, an inventory of other greenhouse gases not covered by the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. Uruguay was a founding member of the Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research and had hosted the high-level meeting at which it had been established. Uruguay also participated in the various meetings of the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol. Within its national territory, it monitored stratospheric ozone in the Southern Cone. It was also implementing a country programme for the study of the effects of climate change on the farming and coastal regions of its national territory.

41. Consistent with its strong environmental policy, Uruguay had ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and offered to host the

latter's secretariat. It would recognize the permanent secretariat as a not-for-profit international organization and would accord it all the privileges and immunities generally granted to international organizations.

42. Mr. FLORENCIO (Brazil) reaffirmed his country's continuing support for and commitment to strengthening the role of the Commission on Sustainable Development and welcomed the entry into force of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It noted, however, that the goal of reducing greenhouse gas levels was still remote. His delegation looked forward to considering new inputs at the First Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, while welcome, did not provide for financial mechanisms to assist African and other developing countries.

43. International credibility was essential to achieving sustainable development. Such credibility required a balanced approach to environmental questions - one which did not give preference to any one issue over the others - and adequate levels of official development assistance. The extremely low levels of ODA flows in 1993 (0.29 per cent of the gross national product of the developed countries) certainly did nothing to build confidence.

44. His delegation was concerned by the fact that the major donors lacked the political will to embark on a programme of international cooperation for development which encompassed all commitments undertaken during the Rio Conference. For example, the results of the pilot programme for the sustainable development of the Amazon region, designed with support from the Group of Seven and the World Bank, had been disappointing. The adequacy of funding must be reviewed in the context of the objectives set forth in chapter 33 of Agenda 21. Referring to the transfer of technology, he reiterated the need for the broad dissemination of information about technologies in the public domain. Consideration should also be given to existing conditions in developed countries for the transfer of technology not only in the public domain but also state-of-the-art technology.

45. His delegation supported the principle set forth in the Rio Declaration that an open economic system would be conducive to sustainable development. It believed that unilateral trade measures purportedly taken to protect the environment actually jeopardized the objectives of sustainable development.

46. His delegation attached great importance to the establishment of indicators for the conservation, management and sustainable development of all types of forests. However, since the value of indicators depended on the reliability of the statistical data on which they were based, and since the availability and reliability of statistical data varied greatly from one country to another and even from one region to another within the same country, studies were necessary in order to identify relevant indicators at the national level with a view to establishing appropriate methods for the compilation and consolidation of comparative data.

47. Mr. KANG'E (Kenya) expressed his delegation's support for the statement delivered by the representative of the Group of 77, adding that the hesitancy of certain developed countries to fulfil their commitments stemmed less from a lack of resources than a lack of political will. His delegation urged all Governments, especially the Governments of the developed countries and the relevant international organizations and agencies, to fulfil their obligations under Agenda 21.

48. Since it attained independence in 1963, Kenya had been a champion of environmental management. Recently, the Government had established a National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) with a view to integrating environmental concerns into its national development plans. It had also embarked on a comprehensive review of its environmental legislation, and had strengthened its national environmental institutions with the establishment of the National Biodiversity Unit. The latter's report to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee had highlighted the requirements of in situ and ex situ conservation of biodiversity in Kenya.

49. His country had also ratified a wide variety of instruments concerning conservation, the most recent ones being the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and it was among the 86 countries which had signed the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

50. His delegation noted that, at its past four sessions, the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) had emphasized that the strengthening of its regional offices should not end up weakening its headquarters in Nairobi. That concern was also expressed in chapter 38.23 of Agenda 21. The co-location of the secretariats of the environment-related conventions, as recommended in chapter 38.22 (h) of Agenda 21, should take into account the need for the most efficient use of resources.

51. Lastly, his delegation welcomed the modest progress achieved by the Commission on Sustainable Development and hoped to see closer interaction between the Commission and other relevant United Nations organs involved in environmental and development activities.

52. Ms. WALLER-HUNTER (Director, Division for Sustainable Development), replying to the question from the representative of Iran, drew attention to the note by the Secretary-General (A/49/463) and indicated that, in view of the many ongoing intergovernmental processes recommended in Agenda 21, it would seem premature at the current stage to formulate specific proposals on the format, scope and organization of the proposed special session for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of Agenda 21 referred to in General Assembly resolution 41/190. As noted in paragraph 7, the Secretary-General would come up with such proposals at a later stage. The note did not conflict with the decision taken by the Commission on Sustainable Development to engage in substantive preparations for the special session of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.